

All Access

Short Fiction
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All Access

I.

Drum solo. Mine.

I'm tired, too, but it's just the solo, a couple more songs, the encore, and I'm outta here.

Really need a steak, man. Brazil is *great* for steak.

Anyway, here we go: A little snare ditty from the last tour, switch-up the China to ride (air drummers love that shit)...

Hm. Seems harder now, on the cowbells.

Gettin' old, baby.

Need whiskey.

Lead singer Rob says there's twenty-thousand people here tonight. Not the most I ever played but definitely big, especially in the "out-of-doors".

Wham!

Done.

Thank God. Now I'm *really* thinkin' "steak".

Whoa, these fuckers are crazy down here! Tearin' their shirts off, and everything!

Guess we sell more shirts.

Strange.

Two more songs...

II.

Gig's over.

Walkin' a corridor backstage, with the gang: Rob, who I mentioned, Phil, Lupé. Love these guys. Got some venue security along too, and these Brazilian dudes are way more like serious police. One's a trip! Kinda chubby and got one of those waxed handlebar moustaches.

Far out.

No Backstage Pass crowd just yet. Curious thing, that whole deal. I mean, yeah, sure, the pass gets you back here...but then what? You're just single a step from the eBay guy skulkin' the loading dock. With the old albums, even.

Whatever. I love these crazy nuts, I really do. I mean, if it wasn't for them? High school gyms and bar-mitzvahs, bro.

Or sis.

Oh, shit. Yep, there they are: reporters and fans. Man, we'll be half the night with these cats, especially since Phil got himself a subpoena this morning. A fairly horseshit deal all over TMZ by now.

I'm hungry!

Damn, forgot I gotta check-in with the wife and kid units. She worries, you know.

Except...

Man, I spaced the phone! Left the son-of-a-bitch on the bus and completely blew it off.

First stop, then.

Like, *now*.

Okay, I *super* don't wanna be a rude asshole with the fan peeps, so I commence to finding escape before it comes to that. I look around, up and down.

Ladder on the wall, but they'd see me. And fucken-A man, it's a ladder.

Behind? That'll do. Saw a passage back a ways. Went off toward the dock, pretty sure.

Right by the eBay guys.

Hah!

Just kidding.

III.

Well, I found the passage. Except my directional beacon's a little stoned or something, because Jesus if it don't feel like I shoulda been outta here a long time ago.

Kinda unnaturally abandoned back here, by the way, but I do dig the peace and quiet. Feels all snug and secure for some oddball fuckin' reason.

I take another turn and damned if I'm not directly backstage again! Shit. Nobody's even here except the road crew and a guard on a stool.

Exit...stage left. And back the way I came. Ah, well. Worst case I stop and ask directions. Men don't like doing that, you know. But if ya gotta, ya gotta.

I'm halfway to somewhere when I turn a corner and find a short male teen in front of me. He's got him an *All Access* backstage pass on a string, and a single large concert program in both his little hands. He's all beaming and expectant an' shit.

Aw, man, how the *hell* did he get back here?!

We stare at each other a sec or two, and then he says, "You're Rudy the drummer. Aren't you?"

He seems sorta sputtery and shy. And weirdly proper. Or maybe "formal" is the better word.

"Yeah, I'm Rudy," I tell him. "What's your name, man?"

"David," he says. "I saw you were lost and I thought you could sign my book."

The kid talks perfect English, with a dash of Portuguese accent. Sure is a little fella! Looks totally white-bread, like a schooler from South England, or whatever.

Interesting.

But not really.

I smile. "Sure, man, no problemo!" The kid's handled it pretty well so far, except when he called his concert program a "book". Language thang; ain't no thang.

"So," I say as I take his Sharpie and program, "Know a quick way back to the bus stop? Could be set of sticks in it for ya."

I start the signing: TO DAVID, FROM A...

Shit!

I meant to write FROM *HIS*.

For a second I think about scratching the Goddamned "A" mostly 'cause I want my steak.

But that ain't pro, or even cool. So I stupidly grin and try to figure out what the hell. Guess I better ask the kid if he minds the frickin' "A" scratched out.

I look up.

Little Davie has himself a small caliber pistol in his right hand. With a move like a sped-up robot, he puts the gun right in my face.

Before I can duck or do shit about it, he pulls the trigger.

IV.

The bullet punctures my left eye and a hot blast rings my head like some kinda pissed-off hair dryer.

Feels like a thunderbolt just sat on my face, too. Lotta light and sound, man. Specs of peppery stuff.

Not uncompelling, this sensation.

Crazy.

The bullet does its thing and my beloved left eye is custard. Soft tissues don't slow the slug for shit, either, and it makes a leisurely beeline past the optic nerve and then starts cookin' through the brain.

Wow.

I know pistols a bit so I know the kid's got what they call a Mouse Gun. Probably a .22 and almost for sure black market.

(Brazilian gun law is pretty tight, you know.)

The bullet hasn't exploded or done anything fancy, so I'll assume it's your basic department store ammo. As such, it's certain to nail the bone in the back of my head and just ricochet around, tearin' the shit out of arteries and whatnot.

That's what small caliber weapons do, you know.

Meanwhile, the hydrostatic shockwave is probably gonna earthquake my ass straight to vegetable land. Wind up like that fucked-up first captain of the Enterprise.

Anyway, the bullet's moving through the bottom of the brain's temporal lobe right now, snipping the ol' nerve pudding right around the hemline. No horrible damage yet.

Minus an eye.

Bullet turns, looks like it's gonna make a minor dogleg and maybe come out my left ear.

Naw, too angular.

Maybe it'll spin backwards and take a trip down the neck.
Could spit itself out the collarbone, or wind up doing some
crisscross through the lungs and liver.

Sucks.

All interesting speculation, but we're forgettin' the major
happs here, right?

I'm gonna die, man.

For sure.

V.

Now the big physics kick in: My head snaps back and the body goes with. Kinetic stuff.

Yep, gonna fall now. Totally toast I'll be, by the time I hit the floor.

Damn.

What brought this kid here to do this thing is anyone's guess. Probably the quintessential loner punk-ass weirdo fuck that no one in any universe likes or loves. Or, maybe an amateur sociopath whose mind finally died, like a nasty pizza.

I'm falling. Did I mention that?

And yes, the bullet did itself a little turn. Now it's at the base of the skull.

If it hits juuuust right...

Yes!!

The bullet breaks the bone at the back of my head like a mean-assed hole punch. Out it goes.

Fantastic news, my friends! See, this means I may yet survive to kick little Davie's fuckin' ass: With the bullet gone, it can't dance around inside and do me in.

More than it already has, of course.

For now, though, back to fallin' down, down, down...

Wham!

Cold stone, baby. I'm flat on my left side, sprawled. Can't move for some reason.

Lemme try again.

Nope. Seconds pass. More.

My right eye detects oozing red stuff on the floor beside. Great. Bleedin' to death. Forgot about that.

Not my day.

I watch the kid. With the one eye.

I got no anger at all. In fact, don't even feel human. More like a scientist from some gonzo planet somewhere, watchin' it all go down over a scope.

The kid lowers his gun and with zero expression walks over and kneels at my head. The little fucker runs his fingers through my hair like I'm a pet dog or somethin'.

All gentle and caring and shit.

For the record, this really fries my ass.

Nothin' happens for a minute or two. David just sits there, staring at my good right eye.

Guess he thinks I'm dead?

Hell, I might actually be dead for all I know.

Now the kid points his gun at my right eye.

Well, this is it.

VI.

Just before the little bastard squeezes-off...

Yes!!

Running down the hall is the chubby handlebar moustache Brazilian security dude from earlier, keys and utility belt rattlin' like wacky-assed sleigh bells.

David hears and looks up. It takes half a second for guard dude to figure this ain't some rock-n-roll thing, and his face shows it. The kid points his .22 at the guard, but the guy rushes and totally bowls the skinny little bitch across the hall.

Linebacker!

I lose sight of the two, but I do hear David squeal like a goat with a Tyrannosaur up his ass. Guard dude is punching the living fuck outta him, I guess.

The guard shouts something in Portuguese and the pair return to view in my good eye. Guard drags David by the hair. The fuckin' hair, man!

About ten feet away, guard dude throws David against the wall, steps back a couple feet, pulls his revolver and shoots the kid right in the mouth.

Damn!

There's a big red "poof" of vaporized blood. Bits of the kid's teeth and bone kind of explode all over.

The guard shoots David again, this time straight through the forehead. Looks odd, really. Just a clean hole in the middle of his melon, like Picasso drew a dot.

With a Sharpie, even.

David is dead. He slides to the ground like a stuffed bag, leaves a shiny trail of brain and goo all the way down.

Somebody grab a mop!

VII.

Ambulance.

I'm kinda sorta conscious, lookin' around at a couple Portuguese med techs. Can't understand what it is they're saying. Wouldn't matter anyway.

Would it?

Wow, that siren is, like, totally annoying, man.

Okay, so, make no mistake: It was way satisfying to watch little David get his fuckin' face blown to bits.

Still, maybe I should wax philosophic about the tides of life and all that shit, how he's a tragic figure, misunderstood, just needed to get laid, whatever.

And then, okay, the guard dude: Wasn't really cool to kill the psycho, was it? I mean, court of law, much? Law and order?

Sam Waterston...?

Love that.

Ah, fuck it. I'm fadin', man. Fadin' hard.

Whirlpool.

Sleep or death?

Somethin'.

And you know what it all means:

Wife, kids, life.

No more dad. No more hubby.

No more Rudy.

Fucked.

Hey, uh, you think they got steak on the other side?

Far out.

End.